

**Living Under the Authority of Christ, Our King,
While Living in Earthly Kingdoms (Daniel 1-6)
April 22 – May 20 2012, Week Four
“For the Praise of His Glory” Daniel 4 & 5:17-23
May 13 2012, Study Notes**

Focus for Week Four

The God who formed us created us to delight in living for the praise of his glory. This same God is working through history and the present day in people, in churches, and in nations that we would glorify him. The human tendency, as we well know, is to live for the praise and glory of something else, of someone else, even of oneself.

Over the last three weeks, we have seen “the Most High God” slowly move Nebuchadnezzar to glorify him alone as Sovereign (i.e. supreme). This morning, we consider Daniel 4, in which God brings Nebuchadnezzar to a place of losing his sanity (4:36) for a time such that he would acknowledge this. This is in contrast to Belshazzar, a king after Nebuchadnezzar, who in Daniel 5 refuses to humble himself to glorify God.

This work of God is a work he does through history, such that all people might be humbled to glorify God and live for the praise of his glory through Christ alone.

Summary of Message

1. During time of reflection, considered the larger theme of Scripture that **God is persistently working to move all history and people to glorify him THROUGH Jesus Christ** (See Revelation 1:5-6, 5:13; Romans 16:25-27).
2. **There is a threefold work of God’s grace whereby God leads one to LIVE for the praise of His glory through Jesus.**
 - a. **The Threefold Process of God’s Grace**
 - 1) First, the process whereby one sees GOD as JUDGING rightly; that is, the process whereby a person comes to acknowledge that God has the right to judge him, her, or them and that his judgements are righteous.
 - 2) Second, the process whereby God judges that person, community or nation’s pride and humbles them.
 - 3) Third, the process whereby God leads such to exalt him alone through Christ.
 - b. **God has been doing this work actively in the world throughout history.**

Example from Isaiah 2:12-18 - “The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled),¹³ for all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and lofty, and all the oaks of Bashan,¹⁴ for all the towering mountains and all the high hills,¹⁵ for every lofty tower and every fortified wall,¹⁶ for every trading ship and every stately vessel.¹⁷ The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,¹⁸ and the idols will totally disappear.”

- c. **God intentionally does this work of grace in his people** (example: See II Chronicles 7:11-16; not especially 7:13-14).
 - d. **God worked in Daniel such that his life modeled this ongoing process of God's grace.**
 - 1) Daniel's name means, "God is my Judge;" Daniel had experienced with his people God's humbling judgement on their pride by sending them into captivity.
 - 2) God had worked in him to glorify God when there were many pressures on him to do otherwise (see Daniel 1-2).
- 3. God was bringing Nebuchadnezzar to submit to this work of grace even if the process was not completed in Christ (Daniel 4).**
- a. Nebuchadnezzar clearly needed this work of grace; he was proud.
 - b. Over time, God was bringing Nebuchadnezzar to see that he has the right to judge Nebuchadnezzar as proud and humble him (see Daniel 1:18-20, 2:46-48, 3:28-29).
 - c. This threefold work grace demonstrated in Daniel 4.
 - 1) God judges rightly (see 4:31-33)
 - 2) Nebuchadnezzar humbled
 - 3) Nebuchadnezzar glorifies God alone (see 4:1-3, 4:34-37)
- 4. Belshazzar refused this work of grace (Daniel 5).**
- a. Belshazzar proud (5:1-6)
 - b. God judges (5:17-23)
- 5. Christ works in us and his church that this work of grace, through our transformed lives, might influence society.**
- a. Christ now has the authority to complete this work of grace in us (see Philippians 2:5-11).
 - b. The Christian community is called to model completely this work of grace to each other (see Philippians 2:1-4).
 - c. When displayed in the lives of those who belong to Christ, this work of grace is a radically different light to a world fueled by pride and self-glorification.
- 6. Oh Lord, we pray you will**
- a. Grow our practice of this threefold grace in our lives and in your Church.
 - b. Grow this work of your grace in the leaders and nations of the world, including in Kyrgyzstan.

For Further Study

1. Read again Daniel 1-5 and note the process whereby God leads Nebuchadnezzar to realize that he has the right to judge. What do you learn about God through this?
2. As you look at the details of how Nebuchadnezzar glorifies God in Daniel 4, what does this show about his understanding of God? What are ways he expresses his praise correctly? What ways is his glorification is yet incomplete?
3. What do you learn about this threefold work of grace from the events of Daniel 5?
4. From your reflections, what have you learned about the authority of Christ, our king, while living in earthly kingdoms?

The Scriptures

Daniel 4 (NIV 2011)

¹ King Nebuchadnezzar, To the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth: May you prosper greatly! ² It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. ³ How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. ⁵ I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. ⁶ So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. ⁷ When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. ⁸ Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.)

⁹ I said, “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me. ¹⁰ These are the visions I saw while lying in bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. ¹¹ The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the wild animals found shelter, and the birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

¹³ “In the visions I saw while lying in bed, I looked, and there before me was a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven. ¹⁴ He called in a loud voice: ‘Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field.

“Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. ¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him.

¹⁷ ““The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.’

¹⁸ “This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”

¹⁹ Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you.”

Belteshazzar answered, “My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! ²⁰ The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, ²¹ with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the wild animals, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds— ²² Your Majesty, you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth.

²³ “Your Majesty saw a holy one, a messenger, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live with the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.’

²⁴ “This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: ²⁵ You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes. ²⁶ The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. ²⁷ Therefore, Your Majesty, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.”

²⁸ All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ he said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?”

³¹ Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. ³² You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes.”

³³ Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

³⁴ At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever.

His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”

³⁶ At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

Daniel 5:17-23 (NIV 2011)

¹⁷ Then Daniel answered the king, “You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.

¹⁸ “Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. ¹⁹ Because of the high position he gave him, all the nations and peoples of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. ²⁰ But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. ²¹ He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.

²² “But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. ²³ Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.